

WHERE ARE WE ? - No. 2

The following are views taken from the driver's cab between Worcester Shrub Hill and Smethwick Galton Bridge taken in 1988. Can you name the locations?



DO YOU KNOW?

How much Stourbridge Junction cost to build in 1901.



(OPC Collection)

In 1897, when the GWR decided to build a new station at Stourbridge Junction, the total cost was set at £61,133. An additional cost of £1,600 was required to purchase four acres of land from the Oldswinford Castle estate. However, Mr Swindell, the owner of Oldswinford Castle agreed to sell the whole estate at a cost of £9,500 provided that he was allowed to remain as tenant of the castle for the remainder of his life at a reasonable rent.

Thus the total cost for a four platform station with 700 ft platforms, goods avoiding lines, exchange sidings and a new stationmaster's house came to £70,633, equivalent to £7,967,000 today. This compares very favourably with current day costs with a two platform station costing in excess of £10 million, albeit with disabled facilities.

EASTERNERS SAW ANAGRAM (or ANAGRAM TEASER ANSWERS) - No 4

The answers to Anagram Teaser No 4 were as follows :-

1 - Edinburgh Waverley, 2 - Melton Mowbray, 3 - Bristol Temple Meads, 4 - Cheltenham Spa, 5 - Glasgow Central, 6 - Manchester Piccadilly, 7 - Southampton Central, 8 - Tiverton Parkway, 9 - Stansted Airport, 10 - Cardiff Central, 11 - Exeter St David's, 12 - Wakefield Westgate, 13 - Brockenhurst, 14 - Bristol Parkway, 15 - Newton Abbot, 16 - Berwick upon Tweed

PLATFORM 2



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A Birmingham to Liverpool service passes through Dudley Port station. The brick parapet on the left of the picture supported the bridge that carried the line to Dudley over the canal

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DUDLEY'S RAILWAYS
3. THE DUDLEY PORT DODGER by Roger Davis

With the opening of the South Staffordshire line in 1850, a through route from Dudley to Birmingham became available although this was somewhat circuitous given that it involved running via Bescot Curve Junction just south of Walsall.

However, on 1 July 1852, the Stour Valley line from Birmingham to Wolverhampton was opened by the Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Stour Valley Railway, a subsidiary of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) with a station at Dudley Port (High Level) immediately above the South Staffordshire Railway's (SSR) own station at Dudley Port.

On 24 July 1851, the SSR gained an Act of Parliament to construct a spur from Sedgeley Junction to Dudley Port High Level on the Stour Valley line, nearly halving the twelve mile trip to seven. The line opened on 2 January 1854 and the SSR, under the direction of John McClean, wasted no time in introducing through services from Dudley to Birmingham New Street.



A Dudley to Walsall DMU service approaches Dudley Port station on 25 July 1959. This photograph was taken from Dudley Port High Level station platform. Sedgeley Junction (note the incorrect spelling) is in the far background close to Sedgley Road West and the embankment from the South Staffordshire line can be seen in front of the houses to the right of the photograph. The line will swing right across the canal and will join the High Level station from the north west.

(Michael Mensing)

The 1895 Bradshaw's timetable is somewhat vague in showing all train services between Dudley and Dudley Port High Level, only showing services connecting with Birmingham New Street to Wolverhampton High Level services. However, it does show the following through services between Dudley and Birmingham New Street.

From Dudley

Dudley (0635), Dudley Port (0641), Oldbury (0646), Spon Lane (0650), Smethwick (0654), Soho (0657), Winson Green (0700), Monument Lane (0705), Birmingham New Street (0710). *Connecting service to Stechford, Coventry, Rugby, Blisworth, Bletchley, Willesden Junction and London Euston (arr 1010).*

Dudley (1030), Dudley Port (1035), Albion (1039), Oldbury (1042), Spon Lane (1045), Smethwick (1048), Soho (1051), Winson Green (1054), Monument Lane (1056), Birmingham New Street (1100)

Dudley (1110), Dudley Port (1115), Oldbury (1120), Smethwick (1124), Monument Lane (1131), Birmingham New Street (1135). *Connecting service to Stechford, Coventry, Rugby, Blisworth, Bletchley, Willesden Junction and London Euston (arr 1440).*

ALL CHANGE AT ... STOURBRIDGE TOWN
The changing scene at one of the Stourbridge line stations



1956

(R M Casserley)



2016



1977



2016



1962

(Michael Mensing)



2013



1990

(D A Thompson)



2013

In addition, the Sutton Park Line takes goods trains from Walsall to Castle Bromwich and Water Orton. It has also been identified by WMCA as a candidate for re-opening as a passenger railway. Sutton Park itself is a nature attraction and is walkable from Sutton Coldfield station. Even so, it warrants its own rail head to bring in visitors from further afield.

The Stourbridge Line itself became a diversionary route on 26 October 2016 when the Bromsgrove Line was closed for engineering works to prepare for electrification. Peak time Hereford to Birmingham services were re-routed through Kidderminster to Smethwick Junction, whereupon they joined the line through Smethwick Rolfe Street to Birmingham New Street station. Clearly, there are a few spare paths to enable our line to carry inter city services but no headway to allow them to stop at our stations. It is rare for diverted trains to pick up or set down at locations that they would not normally call at. Railway by-laws stipulate that a stopping order must be in place and it is no use asking the conductor to let you off at a point which would be convenient to yourself.

I can't help feeling that these diversionary routes could play a greater part in taking traffic off the roads. Destinations which were reachable as a result would be diverse. If Birmingham and the West Midlands followed the London model then we would have an overground network and a choice of alternative routes. Sadly, joined up thinking doesn't happen around here.

WHY ?

The thoughts of a Grumpy Old Rail Traveller

Why do some passengers think that it's compulsory to use their mobile phone in the quiet coach ?

Why is it that the first person to reach the exit door is the one who doesn't know how to operate it ?

Why do the toilets on Pendolinos and Voyagers always stink ?

Why do they sell children's tickets for the quiet zone ?

Why does the occupant always say "oh, is it reserved?" when you try to claim your seat on a train ?



Why do Train Managers say "arriving in" rather than "arriving at" ?

Why do some Train Operating Companies insist on calling railway stations "train stations" ?

Why are the platforms at New Street station still disgusting despite £600m spent ?

From Birmingham New Street

Birmingham New Street (1020), Monument Lane (1025), Winson Green (1028), Soho (1031), Smethwick (1034), Spon Lane (1038), Oldbury (1042), Albion (1046), Dudley Port (1049), Dudley (1055)

Birmingham New Street (1925), Dudley Port (1939), Dudley (1950). *Connecting service from London Euston (dep 1630), Willesden Junction, Northampton Castle, Coventry and Stechford*

Birmingham New Street (2155), Smethwick (2203), Spon Lane (2206), Oldbury (2209), Dudley Port (2214), Dudley (2220). *Connecting service from London Euston (dep 1900), Willesden Junction, Northampton Castle, Coventry and Stechford*

Birmingham New Street (2235), Monument Lane (2240), Winson Green (2244), Soho (2247), Smethwick (2250), Spon Lane (2254), Oldbury (2258), Dudley Port (2305), Dudley (2312).

Of the above stations, Smethwick and Oldbury still exist, now named Smethwick Rolfe Street and Sandwell & Dudley respectively. It is not known whether the London Euston connecting services carried through carriages to and from Dudley.

By 1922, an extensive service was operating between Dudley and Dudley Port High Level and that year's Bradshaw's timetable shows the following service.

MONDAY TO SATURDAY		SO									
Dudley	0509	0549	0609	0634	0644	0652	0659	0724	0737	0802	
Dudley Port	0514	0554	0614	0639	0649	0657	0704	0729	0742	0807	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY											
Dudley	0815	0849	0916	0932	1002	1009	1041	1104	1124	1149	
Dudley Port	0820	0854	0921	0937	1007	1014	1046	1109	1129	1154	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY		SO									
Dudley	1224	1241	1255	1314	1324	1345	1400	1409	1436	1454	
Dudley Port	1229	1246	1300	1319	1329	1350	1404	1414	1441	1459	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY											
Dudley	1505	1515	1527	1545	1557	1617	1637	1649	1709	1721	
Dudley Port	1509	1519	1532	1550	1602	1622	1642	1654	1714	1726	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY											
Dudley	1734	1754	1815	1831	1854	1909	1934	1951	2002	2014	
Dudley Port	1739	1759	1820	1836	1859	1914	1939	1956	2007	2019	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY		SO									
Dudley	2029	2042	2111	2120	2134	2155	2237	2300	Saturday only		
Dudley Port	2034	2047	2116	2125	2139	2200	2242	2305			

SUNDAY											
Dudley	0844	1049	1149	1245	1350	1434	1507	1535	1619	1739	
Dudley Port	0849	1054	1154	1250	1355	1439	1512	1539	1624	1744	

SUNDAY					
Dudley	1849	1913	1940	2149	
Dudley Port	1854	1918	1945	2154	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY		SO									
Dudley Port	0603	0622	0642	0715	0724	0737	0754	0814	0822	0917	
Dudley	0608	0627	0647	0720	0729	0742	0759	0819	0827	0922	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY		SX									
Dudley Port	0930	0951	1009	1025	1059	1124	1135	1145	1204	1242	
Dudley	0935	0956	1014	1030	1104	1129	1140	1149	1209	1247	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY		SO		SO							
Dudley Port	1255	1305	1324	1339	1359	1407	1419	1452	1504	1513	
Dudley	1300	1310	1329	1344	1404	1412	1424	1457	1509	1518	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY											
Dudley Port	1527	1541	1557	1609	1631	1645	1704	1719	1734	1750	
Dudley	1532	1546	1602	1614	1636	1650	1709	1724	1749	1755	

MONDAY TO SATURDAY											
Dudley Port	1804	1826	1854	1909	1919	1941	2002	2014	2027	2043	
Dudley	1809	1831	1900	1914	1924	1946	2007	2019	2032	2048	

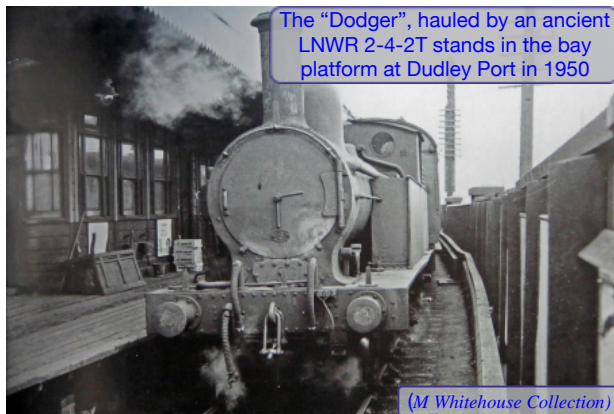
MONDAY TO SATURDAY							
Dudley Port	2059	2120	2131	2145	2202	2252	
Dudley	2104	2125	2136	2150	2207	2257	

SO - Saturday only
 SX - Saturday excepted

SUNDAY											
Dudley Port	0902	1116	1214	1304	1405	1452	1521	1604	1633	1759	
Dudley	0908	1121	1219	1309	1410	1457	1526	1609	1638	1804	

SUNDAY					
Dudley Port	1903	1929	1951	2204	
Dudley	1908	1934	1956	2209	

By the time of nationalisation, the 1922 service of over 50 journeys each way on Mondays to Saturdays and 14 journeys each way on Sundays had been drastically reduced. The 1948 timetable shows just about a dozen journeys each way on Mondays to Saturdays with 4 on Sundays. Trains left Dudley at 0646, 0801, 0850, 1000, 1050, 1205, 1435 (SX), 1600, 2055 (SX), 2130 (SX) and 2156 (SX) on Mondays to Saturdays and at 0930, 1105, 1910 and 2050 on Sundays. Return journeys from Dudley Port were at 0708, 0758, 0818, 0910, 1015, 1020, 1106, 1224 (SO), 1230 (SX), 1455, 1626 (SO), 1638 (SX), 1654, 1835 (SX), 1915, 2110 (SX), 2140 (SX) and 2205 (SX) on Mondays to Saturdays and at 1225, 1510, 2025 and 2155 on Sundays.



(M Whitehouse Collection)

DIVERSE DIVERSIONS

by Rob Hebron

I first started to use trains when I was a teenager. When I was courting (as they called it then), British Rail ran excursion trains on Bank Holiday Mondays and I never missed an opportunity to explore seaside resorts. Many destinations were otherwise not easily reachable by local trains and connections. The Stourbridge Line did not enjoy the frequency of services that it has now and so these specials were a welcome addition to the normal timetable. The excursions provided overtime for local train staff and the loco hauled stock was of the corridor type with comfortable compartments. Naturally, it was wise to avoid a carriage occupied by families with numerous excited children.

The diagram of the Stourbridge Line then was Worcester Shrub Hill to Lichfield City via Birmingham New Street. The excursion trains picked up at key stations en route such as Kidderminster, Stourbridge Junction, Cradley Heath and Rowley Regis. However, there was no requirement or necessity to operate via Birmingham and so trains could take a diversion through Soho to Wolverhampton. This was my first experience of travelling on a “foreign” railway line and it saved considerable time on the way to North Wales.

The Soho route is still in use today for freight trains and some Walsall local services and is one of many interesting avoiding lines. Others include the Camp Hill line, the northern section of which was once used by trains to Stratford-upon-Avon on Sundays when Birmingham Moor Street was closed and the service started and terminated at Birmingham New Street. It is currently used by CrossCountry services on the Manchester Piccadilly to Bristol Temple Meads route as well as freight services. The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has ambitions to re-open the Camp Hill line for local passengers and would restore stations at Moseley and Kings Heath. A grandiose infrastructure project involving chords to the Cross City (south) line would be a game changer for the region and the business case is strong even if funding is not forthcoming.



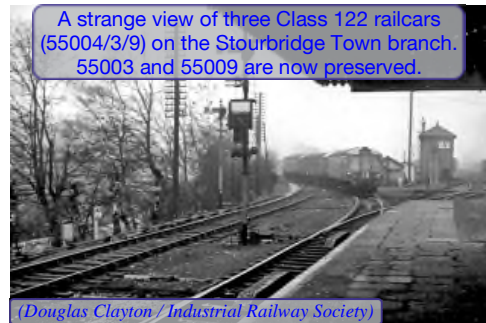
Elsewhere, we can find another example of a diversionary line at Stechford on the Birmingham to Coventry route. This spur allows freight trains to run to Aston and beyond, avoiding Birmingham. In BR days during the 1970s and 80s, when the Motor Show was at the NEC, special passenger services ran from Stourbridge Junction and Wolverhampton stopping at all stations to Smethwick Rolfe Street before running non stop to Birmingham International via the Soho route to Perry Barr, thence to Aston and Stechford, avoiding Birmingham New Street completely.

The three Class 121 bubble cars operated the Stourbridge Town branch until the early 1990s, with 55033 repainted into an experimental "Midline" livery. However, during 1990 and 1991, the 2-car Class 155 second generation Sprinter units were converted into single car units and designated Class 153. Once the conversion had taken place, the new Class 153 units replaced the Class 121/122 bubble cars and thus nearly 35 years of bubble car operation on the Stourbridge Town branch ended.



Midline liveried 55033 at Stourbridge Town

(John Carter)



A strange view of three Class 122 railcars (55004/3/9) on the Stourbridge Town branch. 55003 and 55009 are now preserved.

(Douglas Clayton / Industrial Railway Society)

However, this is not the end of the story. The Class 121/122 bubble cars have proved very popular with preservation groups and eight Class 122 and eight Class 121 units preserved, in addition to two Class 121 bubble cars which were in service with Chiltern Railways until May 2016 and one Class 121 bubble car which is owned by Network Rail. The preserved examples include many units from both classes that worked on the Stourbridge Town branch.

THEY SAID IT!
A Wikipedia Guide to the Class 150s

The following extract was found in a Wikipedia article entitled "British Rail Class 150" describing the units which were used on the Stourbridge line for about 20 years up to 2011.

Birmingham-based units were renumbered into the 1500xx range by subtracting 100 from the previous number (e.g. 150103 became 150003). This also gave an extra operational advantage of there being an extra set of passenger door controls within the train for use of the Guard, this made it easier for them to collect revenue on the train without having to run the full length of the unit to release the doors at a station.



Two 3-car Class 150s (150015 and 150009) pass at Birmingham Moor Street on 1 September 2005.

They obviously didn't tell the majority of the Stourbridge line guards!

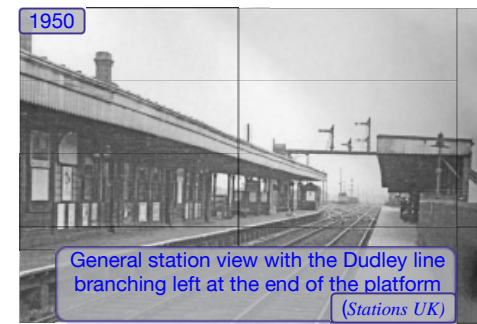
Like the Dudley to Walsall line, the Dudley Dodger service succumbed to the Beeching Axe after 5 July 1964. The final timetable from 9 September 1963 showed the service spectacularly reduced.

MONDAY TO SATURDAY	
Dudley	0750
Dudley Port High Level	0754

MONDAY TO SATURDAY	
Dudley Port High Level	0808
Dudley	0812

Of course, this single service to the High Level station was supplemented by services to the Low Level station, not only on the Walsall line but also on the old GWR service to Birmingham Snow Hill via West Bromwich which will be featured in the next edition of this series.

The electrification of the Birmingham New Street to Wolverhampton High Level line saw the staggered platforms of Dudley Port High Level station demolished. At the same time, the A461 at Dudley Port was upgraded to dual carriageway and the bridge under the canal and railway line replaced by two separate bridges. This resulted in Dudley Port station being rebuilt as a single island platform with minimal facilities north west of the new bridge, thus removing the Dudley bay platform.



1950

General station view with the Dudley line branching left at the end of the platform (Stations UK)



1950

The "Dodger" waits in the bay platform as a "Jubilee" passes on a Manchester express (M Whitehouse Collection)



2016

A Walsall to Wolverhampton stopper calls at Dudley Port



2016

An Edinburgh to London Euston express passes through Dudley Port

The embankment from Dudley Port down to Sedgeley Junction survived until about 1980 when it was removed and the land between the South Staffordshire line and the houses on Peel Street levelled to provide land for a new housing estate. The only signs that a line ever existed east of Sedgeley Junction are the graffiti covered abutments of the bridge that carried the line over the Birmingham Canal which runs parallel to the main Birmingham to Wolverhampton line.

NO LONGER STOPPING AT ... SOHO AND WINSON GREEN
by John Warren

This is the 2nd in a series of articles that looks at the stations between Birmingham Snow Hill and Worcester that have closed since 1960, working down the line from north to south.



Soho and Winson Green looking towards Wolverhampton



(Tony Harden Collection)

Date Opened	14 November 1854
Final Passenger Services on	4 March 1972
Number of Platforms	4
Number of Trains (1959)	91 (M-F), 82 (Sa), 50 (Su)
Number of Trains (1972)	19 (M-F), 16 (Sa), 0 (Su)

A Snow Hill bound service arrives



(Robert Ferris)



Station Name : Soho (November 1854 - May 1893), Soho and Winson Green (May 1893 - June 1965), Winson Green (June 1965 - March 1972)

Soho and Winson Green station was situated to the east of Benson Road. The main station building was on Benson Road and a footbridge gave access to the four platforms. The Midland Metro stop at Soho (Benson Road) partially occupies the site of the two platforms on the main line. A mound of earth can be seen on the left as you pass the site heading towards Stourbridge Junction and this marks the remains of the down relief platform seen on the left of the top photograph. When the station name was shortened in 1965, this was achieved by crudely painting over the "Soho and" portions of the signs. Things were done on the cheap in the 60s!



(Tony Harden Collection)

FIRST GENERATION BUBBLE CARS
by Roger Davis

As previous editions of Platform 2 has revealed, up to the end of the 1950s the Stourbridge Town branch had been operated at different times by GWR Railmotors, push-pull steam operated trains and the venerable GWR "Flying Banana" railcars.

As part of the British Railways Modernisation Plan, twenty single-car first generation units, or bubble cars as they were affectionately known, were ordered from Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company and the first of these emerged from the works on 22 April 1958. The entire class was delivered to British Railways between May and July 1958, and the first of these entered service during May on the Stourbridge Town branch and the Birmingham - Great Bridge - Dudley service. The closure of the latter in 1964 meant that the West Midlands units either worked the Town branch or were used to strengthen services on other West Midlands suburban routes. Between 1968 and 1972, they also operated the remaining services from Birmingham Snow Hill to Wolverhampton Low Level and Langley Green. When DMUs were classified by British Rail in the early 1970s, the bubble cars were classified as Class 122.



(Andrew Smith / miac.co.uk)

The success of these single-car units encouraged the Western Region to order a further batch of sixteen single cars in 1960, this time built by Pressed Steel in Linwood (Scotland). The units took over services originally monopolised by GWR built railcars but as more and more cross country and branch lines closed that work became less and less. As a result, the class was later concentrated around the Reading, Bristol, Cardiff and Plymouth areas. They were used on the West London branch lines, the Severn Beach branch, lines in the Welsh valleys and the Cornish branch lines. In the early 1970s, they were classified as Class 121.



(railwaymedia.co.uk)

In 1986, three of the Pressed Steel units, numbers 55032, 55033 and 55034 were transferred to Tyseley and used on local services around Birmingham. These three units effectively replaced their Class 122 cousins on the Stourbridge Town branch after 28 years of service, and the Class 122s were earmarked for withdrawal. As it turned out, problems with second-generation Pacer units in the South West saw six of the units, including some of the Stourbridge branch stalwarts, transferred to work on the Cornish branches and two of these survived until 22 December 1993.